Methodology for the VoicesDMV Survey

Timothy Triplett

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Voices of the Community: DC, Maryland, Virginia (VoicesDMV), is a community engagement initiative from the Greater Washington Community Foundation, in partnership with the Urban Institute, designed to lift up residents' stories and perceptions of the quality of life in the Greater Washington region. Over eight months, the Greater Washington Community Foundation and the Urban Institute surveyed more than 3,000 respondents, held seven focus groups with special populations throughout the region, and engaged residents in four community conversations in Prince George's County, Northern Virginia, Montgomery County, and Washington, DC. The result is a collection of rich, local data that provide a road map to drive civic engagement, community-driven development, policy considerations, and more effective grantmaking in our region. This brief discusses the methodology for the 2017 VoicesDMV survey.

The GfK Group, using its KnowledgePanel, conducted the 2017 VoicesDMV survey on behalf of the Urban Institute. Funding for this project was provided by the Greater Washington Community Foundation. This methodology report follows the American Association for Public Opinion Research Transparency Initiative standards for methods disclosure. The survey questionnaire is available upon request and includes both the VoicesDMV questionnaire and the questions used by GfK to get the demographics of their KnowledgePanel respondents.

The target population consists of the following: noninstitutionalized adults ages 18 and older living in the District of Columbia, Prince George's County, Montgomery County, Fairfax County, or Northern Virginia (including Arlington County and the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, and Falls Church). The data-

collection field period started on July 20, 2017, and ended on August 21, 2017. Participants completed the VoicesDMV survey in 15 minutes (median).

To sample the population, GfK selected households from its KnowledgePanel, a probability-based web panel designed to be representative of the United States, combined with internet opt-in respondents. To qualify for the survey, a panel member or opt-in respondent had to be

- at least 18 years of age and
- residing in the District of Columbia, Prince George's County, Montgomery County, Fairfax County, or Northern Virginia (including Arlington County and the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, and Falls Church).

GfK recruits panel members by using address-based sampling methods. Once household members are recruited for the panel and assigned to a study sample, they are notified by email for survey taking, or panelists can visit their online member page for survey taking (instead of being contacted by telephone or postal mail). This allows surveys to be fielded quickly and economically. In addition, this approach reduces the burden placed on respondents because email notification is less intrusive than telephone calls. Further, respondents can choose what time of day to complete their assigned survey.

To recruit the opt-in sample, this study leveraged Lucid's Fulcrum Router, a survey router that assigned internet users who were willing to participate in a survey in real time. The survey router recruits potential respondents from various websites to complete surveys based on the sample needs of a survey or group of surveys at the time a respondent is willing to participate. The router assigned opt-in internet respondents to the VoicesDMV study until the quota needs (i.e., number of respondents) for each of the target geographic study regions (the District of Columbia, Prince George's County in Maryland, Montgomery County in Maryland, Fairfax County in Virginia, and Northern Virginia) were met.

All respondents completed the survey online as a web survey. As a standard, email reminders to all KnowledgePanel nonresponders were sent on day 3 of the field period. For opt-in respondents, reminders were sent on day 4 of the field period. Additional email reminders to KnowledgePanel nonresponders were sent on days 26 and 30 of the field period. The survey was only administered in English; the data capture responses only from eligible respondents who were able to complete an English language survey.

The number of completed interviews was 3,070, of which 341 were from the KnowledgePanel, and 2,729 were from the internet opt-in sample. The statistical basis for a survey to have a margin of sampling error is that it must be based on a probability sample, where everyone in the survey population has a chance of being selected and the respondents are selected randomly. The VoicesDMV Survey is for the most part a nonprobability opt-in survey that does not have a "grounded statistical tie" to the population. Thus, estimates from this study are subject to unknown error that cannot be measured. We have modeled the data so that the characteristics of the survey respondents align with the target population. The credibility intervals we report have been adjusted for design effects because of

weighting. We report credibility intervals that reflect the uncertainty of statistical results generated using Bayesian statistical methods. The margin of sampling error and credibility intervals relay the statistical uncertainty of survey results. But there is a big difference: credibility intervals are dependent on underlying assumptions tied to the study's statistical model. The credibility interval we report is not the margin of sampling error that the public has come to understand as the statistical uncertainty of probability-based scientific polls. Instead, credibility intervals are used when reporting on nonprobability surveys (typically opt-in online surveys).

For this study, the following benchmark distributions of adults ages 18 and older from the 2015 American Community Survey were used for the raking adjustment of weights:

- Gender (male, female) by age (18–29, 30–44, 45–59, and 60 and older)
- Race and ethnicity (white, non-Hispanic; black, non-Hispanic; other and two or more races, non-Hispanic; Hispanic)
- Education (less than high school and high school, some college, bachelor's degree or higher)
- Household income (below $25,000, $25,000–$49,999, $50,000–$74,999, $75,000–$99,999, $100,000–$149,999, $150,000 and above)

The following weighting adjustment were done separately in each of the following five areas:

- District of Columbia
- Prince George's County, Maryland
- Montgomery County, Maryland
- Fairfax County, Virginia
- Northern Virginia (excluding Fairfax County), including Arlington County and the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, and Falls Church

In addition to the demographic weighting adjustments, the survey weights were calibrated using a procedure developed by GfK to correct for biases from systematic undercoverage associated with the nonprobability samples from online panels. These coverage problems include overrepresentation of people with certain behavioral or attitudinal characteristics, such hyper use of the internet and higher propensity for early adoption of new products and technologies. Compared with samples that exclusively rely on nonprobability samples without any calibration, the calibrated weight adjustment enables the resulting blended sample to represent the target population more effectively. This improved representativeness is not only with respect to geodemographic distributions, but with respect to important attitudinal and behavioral measures.

Repeated studies have shown that respondents from nonprobability and probability-based samples differ in several ways. For instance, respondents from nonprobability samples generally have a higher

propensity for adopting new products and services. Moreover, GfK's research has identified additional measures about which significant differences exist. As such, GfK's calibration methodology aims to realign such respondents from nonprobability samples with respect to multidimensional measures that are significant differentiators between the two types of respondents.

- Approximately, how many hours of television do you watch on an average day?
- In a typical week, about how many hours do you spend on the internet for personal use?
- How often have you used the internet to express your opinions about political or community issues within the past 12 months?
- How much does the following statement describe you?

With the above questions administered to both KnowledgePanel and online opt-in respondents, GfK identified how the two sets of responses differ and applied correcting weights to realign online opt-in respondents with those from the probability-based KnowledgePanel sample component. Consequently, when survey data from non-KnowledgePanel respondents are calibrated with those from the KnowledgePanel, survey estimates from the blended sample are improved.

If you would like additional methodology, please contact Tim Triplett (ttriplett@urban.org).

To view the brief "Voices of the Community: DC, Maryland, Virginia" that highlights findings from the 2017 VoicesDMV Survey, please visit https://www.thecommunityfoundation.org/voicesdmv.

About the Authors

Timothy Triplett is a senior research associate and senior survey methodologist with the Statistical Methods Group at the Urban Institute, where his work primarily involves studies that include survey data collection, complex sample designs, and random experimental designs. He conducts methodological research addressing such issues as estimating nonresponse bias, weighting strategies, and imputation procedures. He works with the Decennial Census, American Community Survey, and the Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the Current Population Survey to create survey weights, impute for missing data, or analyze nonresponse for the numerous surveys collected for or by the Urban Institute.

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2100 M Street NW
Washington, DC 20037

www.urban.org

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